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**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503
OFFICE OF FEDERAL
PROCUREMENT
POLICY**

April 4, 1984

POLICY LETTER 84-1

**TO THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND
ESTABLISHMENTS**

SUBJECT: Federally Funded Research and Development Centers

1. **Purpose.** This policy letter establishes Government-wide policies for the establishment, use, periodic review, and termination of the sponsorship of Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs).
2. **Supersession** Memorandum from the Chairman to the Members of the Federal Council for Science and Technology, dated November 1, 1967, which set forth criteria for identification of FFRDCs and the requirement for a master Government listing of these centers, is superseded by this policy letter.
3. **Authority.** This policy letter is being issued pursuant to Sections 6(a), 6(d)(1) and 6(d)(8) of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy Act, as amended, 41 U.S. C. 405 (a), (d)(1) and (d)(8), which empower the Administrator of OFPP to prescribe Government-wide procurement policies and to complete action on the recommendations of the Commission on Government Procurement.
4. **Background.** The Departments of Energy, Defense, Health and Human Services, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the National Science Foundation currently sponsor a total of 34 FFRDCs. Non-sponsoring departments and agencies also utilize these FFRDCs. Federal funding of FFRDC's currently exceeds 4 billion dollars per year.

In 1967, a Government-wide policy for the identification and maintenance of a master listing of these FFRDCs was issued (reference paragraph 2 - Supersession). In 1972, the Commission on Government Procurement recommended that the Federal Government keep open the option to organize and use FFRDCs to satisfy needs that cannot be satisfied effectively by other organizational resources. The Commission also recommended that agency heads periodically review the continuing need for existing FFRDCs and approve any proposal for new FFRDCs, with specific attention paid to the method of ultimate termination of sponsorship. This policy letter is based on the executive branch consideration of the Commission's recommendations.

5. Definitions

- a. **Primary Sponsor** -- The executive agency which manages, administers or monitors overall use of the FFRDC.

b. **Sponsor** means an executive agency which funds and monitors specific work of a continuing nature with an FFRDC and is party to a sponsoring agreement. Multiple sponsorship of an FFRDC is possible so long as one agency agrees to act as the primary sponsor for administrative purposes.

c. **Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC).**

(1) FFRDCs do not have a prescribed organizational structure. They can range from the traditional contractor-owned/contractor-operated or Government-owned/contractor-operated (GOCO) organizational structures to various degrees of contractor/Government control and ownership. In general, however, all of the following criteria should be met before an activity is identified as an FFRDC:

(a) Performs, analyzes, integrates, supports (non-financial) and/or manages basic research, applied research, and/or development. (Activities primarily engaged in routine quality control and testing, routine service activities, production, mapping and surveys, and information dissemination, even though otherwise meeting the requirements of paragraph 5.c., are specifically excluded from FFRDC designation).

(b) Performance of the functions in 5.c.(1)(a) is either upon the direct request of the Government or under a broad charter from the Government, but in either case the results are directly monitored by the Government. However, the monitoring shall not be such as to create a personal services relationship, or to cause disruptions that are detrimental to the productivity and/or quality of the FFRDC's work.

(c) The majority of the activity's financial support (70% or more) is received from the Government with a single agency usually predominating in that financial support.

(d) In general, most or all of the facilities are owned by the Government of funded, under contract, by the Government.

(e) The activity is operated, managed and/or administered by either a university or consortium of universities, other nonprofit organization or industrial firm as an autonomous organization or as an identifiable separate operating unit of a parent organization.

(f) A long term relationship evidenced by specific agreements exists or is expected to exist between the operator, manager, or administrator of the activity and its primary sponsor.

(2) In addition to the above criteria, the relationship between the activity and the Government should exhibit the following characteristics in order to qualify for FFRDC identification:

(a) The activity (organization and/or facilities) is brought into existence at the initiative of a Government agency or bureau to meet some special research or development need which, at the time, cannot be met as effectively by existing in-house or contractor resources.

(b) Work from other than a sponsoring agency is undertaken only to the extent permitted by the sponsoring agency and in accordance with the procedures of the sponsoring agency.

(c) The activity, whether the operator of its own or a Government-owned facility, has access, beyond that which is common to the normal contractual relationship, to Government and/or supplier data, employees, and facilities needed to discharge its responsibilities efficiently and effectively, whether the data is sensitive/proprietary or not.

(d) The primary sponsor undertakes the responsibility to assure a reasonable continuity in

the level of support to the activity consistent with the agency's need for the activity and the terms of the sponsoring agreement.

(e) The activity is required to conduct its business in a responsible manner befitting its special relationship with the Government, to operate in the public interest free from organizational conflict of interest, and to disclose its affairs (as an FFRDC) to the primary sponsor.

6. Policy.

a. **General.** Agencies will rely, to the extent practicable, on existing in-house and contractor sources for satisfying their special research or development needs consistent with established procedures under The Economy Act of 1932 (31 UCS 1535), other statutory authority or procurement/assistance regulations. A thorough assessment of existing alternative sources for meeting these needs is especially important prior to establishing an FFRDC. This Policy Letter does not apply to the performance of commercial activities. Performance of commercial activities is governed by OMB Circular No. A-76.

b. **Establishment of an FFRDC.** In establishing an FFRDC, the sponsoring agency shall ensure that:

(1) Existing alternative sources for satisfying agency requirements cannot effectively meet the special research or development needs (6.a).

(2) At least three notices are placed over a 90-day period in the **Commerce Business Daily** and **The Federal Register** indicating the agency's intention to sponsor an FFRDC and the scope and nature of the effort to be performed by the FFRDC.

(3) There is sufficient Government expertise available to adequately and objectively evaluate the work to be performed by the FFRDC.

(4) Controls are established to ensure that the costs of the services being provided to the Government are reasonable.

(5) The responsibility for capitalization of the FFRDC has been defined in such a manner that ownership of assets may be readily and equitably determined upon termination of the FFRDC relationship with its sponsor(s).

(6) The purpose, mission and general scope of effort of the FFRDC is stated clearly enough to enable differentiation between work which should be performed by the FFRDC and that which should be performed by a non-FFRDC.

c. **Sponsoring Agreements.** When FFRDCs are established, long-term Government relationships are encouraged in order to provide the continuity that will attract high quality personnel to the FFRDC. This relationship should be of a type to encourage the FFRDC to maintain currency in its field(s) of expertise, maintain its objectivity and independence, preserve its familiarity with the needs of its sponsor(s), and provide a quick response capability. A contract is the generally preferred instrument under which an FFRDC accomplishes effort for its sponsor(s). However, there may be instances where other legal instruments may be appropriate. A written agreement of sponsorship between the FFRDC and its sponsor or primary sponsor where more than one sponsor is involved may be used in addition to the contract or other legal instrument under which an FFRDC accomplishes effort. The specific content of a sponsoring agreement will vary depending on the situation. However, there are certain areas common to all situations that must be addressed. The following requirements must be addressed in either a contract, a sponsoring agreement or sponsoring agency's policies and procedures.

(1) Mandatory Requirements

(a) A delineation of the purpose for which the FFRDC is being brought into being along

with a description of its mission, general scope of effort envisioned to be performed, and the role the FFRDC is to have in accomplishment of the sponsoring agency's mission. This delineation must be consistent with the definition of an FFRDC set forth in paragraph 5.c(1)(a) and will be sufficiently descriptive so that work to be performed by the FFRDC can be determined to be within the purpose, mission and general scope of effort which should be performed by a non-FFRDC. This delineation shall constitute the base against which changes in an existing FFRDC's purpose, mission or general scope of effort will be measured.

(b) Provisions for the orderly termination or nonrenewal of the agreement, disposal of assets and settlement of liabilities. The term of the sponsoring agreement will not exceed five years but can be renewed, as a result of periodic review, in not to exceed five year increments.

(c) A prohibition against the FFRDC competing with any non-FFRDC concern in response to a Federal agency formal Request For Proposal for other than the operation of an FFRDC. This prohibition is not required to be applied to any parent organization or other subsidiary of the parent organization in its non-FFRDC operations. However, sponsoring agencies may expand this prohibition as they determine necessary and appropriate.

(d) A delineation of whether or not the FFRDC may accept work from other than the sponsor(s). If non-sponsor work can be accepted, a delineation of the procedures to be followed along with any limitations as to the clients (other Federal agencies, State or local governments, non-profit or profit organizations, etc.) from which work may be accepted. Limitations and procedures with respect to responding to requests for information as to an FFRDC's capabilities or qualifications are inherently a part of the "work for others" question and will be addressed by the sponsoring agency.

(2) Other Requirements As Appropriate

(a) When cost type contracts are used, the sponsor(s) should identify any cost elements which will require advance agreement. Such items may be, but are not necessarily limited to, salary structure, depreciation, various indirect costs such as independent research and development or others as determined appropriate by the sponsor(s).

(b) Where fees are determined by the sponsor(s) to be appropriate, considerations which will affect their negotiation should be identified. Such considerations may be, but are not necessarily limited to, weighted guidelines, risks, use of Government furnished property and facilities, needs or others as determined appropriate by the sponsor(s).

(c) Other provisions are determined appropriate by the sponsor(s).

d. Changing the Basic Scope of an Existing FFRDC's Sponsoring Agreement. In changing the purpose, mission and general scope of effort to be performed or role of an existing FFRDC as set forth in its sponsoring agreement (see 6.c.(a)(a)), the sponsoring agency shall make such changes consistent with its statutory authority and the requirements for establishing a new FFRDC as set forth in paragraph 6.b.

e. Use of the FFRDC by the Sponsor or Primary Sponsor in the Case of Multiple Agency Sponsorship. The sponsor, or primary sponsor in the case of multiple sponsorship, will ensure that all work it places with its FFRDC(s) is within the purpose, mission, and general scope of effort of the FFRDC (paragraph 6.c.) and in accordance with this Policy Letter. This includes work a sponsoring agency agrees to accept from a non-sponsoring Federal agency under the provisions of The Economy Act of 1932 (31 USC 1535) or other statutory authority. Sponsoring agencies must comply with applicable procurement or assistance statutes, policies and regulations for non-competitive actions before placing work which is outside the scope of the sponsor's contractual or sponsoring agreement with an FFRDC.

f. Use of an Existing FFRDC by a Non-Sponsoring Federal Agency. Non-sponsoring Federal agencies may use an FFRDC only if the terms of the FFRDC's sponsoring agreement or contract permit work from other than a sponsoring agency. Where use by a non-sponsor is permitted by the Sponsoring Agreement, the work must require the special relationship of an FFRDC as defined in paragraph 5.c. and either be treated as direct procurement (action) or processed under The Economy Act of 1932 (31 USC 1535) or other statutory authority must clearly fall within the purpose, mission and general scope of effort established by the sponsoring agency for the FFRDC (paragraph 6.c.). Processing under the Economy Act or other statutory authority is subject to agreement by the receiving agency. Non-sponsoring agencies must fully comply with procurement or assistance statutes, policies and regulations for non-competitive actions prior to placing work directly with a specific FFRDC. The FFRDC must comply with the procedures established by the sponsoring agency (paragraph 6.c.(1)(d)) before accepting work from a non-sponsoring Federal agency.

g. Use of an Existing FFRDC by Other Than a Federal Agency. Work from other than a Federal agency may be accepted only to the extent permitted by the sponsoring agency. The FFRDC must comply with the procedures established by the sponsoring agency (paragraph 6.c.(1)(d)) before accepting work from other than a Federal agency.

h. Consulting Services. Agencies sponsoring FFRDC work which constitutes consulting services, as defined by OMB Circular No. A-120, will comply with the provisions of that Circular.

i. Production/Manufacturing. FFRDCs will not be asked to perform quantity production and manufacturing work unless authorized by legislation. Such activities as breadboarding, modeling or other tasks inherent to R&D are permissible.

j. Periodic Review. Prior to renewal of a sponsoring agreement, agencies shall conduct a comprehensive review of their use and need for each FFRDC that they sponsor. Where multiple agency sponsorship exists this review will be a coordinated interagency effort. When the funding for an FFRDC is a specific line item within the sponsoring agency's budget, the comprehensive review may be done in conjunction with the budget process or the review may be done separately. The sponsoring agency(s) shall apprise other agencies who use the FFRDC of the scheduled review and afford them an opportunity to assume sponsorship in the event the current sponsorship is determined no longer appropriate. Final approval to continue or terminate an agency's sponsorship arrangement with a given FFRDC as a result of this review shall rest with the head of the sponsoring agency. The results of this review will be formally documented. The periodic review should include:

- (1) An examination of the agency's special technical needs and mission requirements to determine if and at what level they continue to exist.
- (2) Consideration of alternative sources to meet the agency's needs. Such consideration will include compliance with the Notice and Publication requirements of P.L. 98-72 (15 USC 637(e)) prior to renewal of the contract or Sponsoring Agreement unless otherwise exempted.
- (3) An assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of the FFRDC in meeting the agency's needs.
- (4) An assessment of the adequacy of the FFRDC management in assuring a cost effective operation.
- (5) A determination that the guidelines of section 6 are being satisfied.

k. Termination or nonrenewal of an FFRDC Relationship. When a sponsor's need for the FFRDC no longer exists, the sponsorship may be transferred to one or more Government agencies, if appropriately justified. Otherwise it shall be phased out, the assets disposed of and all liabilities settled as provided by the terms and conditions of the sponsoring agreement.

7. Action Requirements.

- a. Not later than September 30, 1984, each agency currently sponsoring an FFRDC will review the terms of its existing agreements with the FFRDCs for compliance with this policy letter. Where existing agreements do not comply with this policy letter the primary sponsor will develop a schedule to bring the agreements into compliance not later than the next contract renewal or five years from the effective date of this policy letter, whichever comes first.
- b. Where the review required by 7.a. reveals that a clear statement of the purpose, mission and general scope of effort, as described in paragraph 6.b.(6) and 6.c.(1)(a), does not exist, the sponsoring agency shall ensure such a statement is developed not later than September 30, 1984.
- c. The primary sponsor will notify the Office of Science and Technology Policy prior to designating any new organization as an FFRDC (paragraph 6.b.), changing the basic scope of effort of an existing FFRDC (paragraph 6.d.) or changing the status of an existing FFRDC (paragraph 6.k.).
- d. The National Science Foundation will maintain a master Government list of FFRDCs based upon the definition in this Policy Letter.
- e. FFRDCs will be identified by their primary sponsors who will provide information, including funding data, on the type of R&D being performed by the FFRDCs to the National Science Foundation upon their request for such information.
- f. Each agency head is responsible for ensuring that the provisions of this policy are followed.

8. **Effective Date.** The Policy Letter is effective (60 days after publication in the **Federal Register**).

9. **Implementation.** Aspects of this policy letter requiring implementation will be covered by the Department of Defense, the General Services Administration and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in the Federal Acquisition Regulation not later than 180 days from the date of this policy letter. Implementation will be written so as to be compatible with the requirements, as of the date of this policy letter, of FAR 17.6 "Management and Operating Contracts" when the arrangement with an FFRDC constitutes a management and operating contract.

10. **Information Contact.** All questions or inquiries about this policy letter should be submitted to the Office of Management and Budget, Office of Federal Procurement Policy, telephone (202) 395-6810.

11. **Sunset Review Date.** This policy letter will be reviewed no later than six years after its effective date for extension, modification, or rescission.

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Administrator